



iabin

Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network
IABIN Pollinators Thematic Network (PTN)



A Network for Pollinator Information and Expertise in the Western Hemisphere

The PTN will facilitate the discovery, collection, digitization, management, and exchange of pollinator observation and collection data from and throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Pollinators provide an essential ecological service to over 90 percent of the world's wild and cultivated flowering plants and an estimated one-third of the food consumed by humans. There is a positive correlation between plant diversity and pollinator diversity. Recent studies in Europe and the Americas have concluded that rapid declines are evident in some very important pollinator populations including honey bees (*Apis mellifera*). While declines are suspected in populations of many other species of pollinators, in many cases, data and experts are not available to test this hypothesis.

The successful monitoring, management, and conservation of pollinators will depend on the availability and accessibility of pollinator data and information. In 2002, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) invited "Parties and other Governments, and relevant organizations to contribute to the

implementation of the International Pollinators Initiative," which promotes "coordinated action worldwide to monitor pollinator decline, its causes and its impact on pollination services; [and] addresses the lack of taxonomic information on pollinators" (COP Decision IV/5 2002).

Building a Network for Pollinators

The Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) Pollinators Thematic Network (PTN), one of five thematic networks of the IABIN, was initiated in May 2006 with \$180,000 in funding from the World Bank. The network will address the needs and information gaps identified by the CBD, and by the pollinator research and conservation communities through a questionnaire administered in 2006-07. Coordinated by the Coevolution Institute, the PTN

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will be developed by a consortium of organizations consisting of the University of Sao Paulo (Laboratory of Agricultural Automation and Bee Laboratory), the Integrated Taxonomic Information System, and the National



A tiny bee – one of the most important pollinators in the world – forages among the flowers of an Aldrago tree in Brazil.

Biological Information Infrastructure of the United States Geological Survey.

Data Standards for Pollinators

In December 2006, a joint workshop was held in collaboration with the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and with expert participation from the pollinator research and conservation communities, including from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Reference Center on Environmental Information (CRIA) in Brazil, the National Biodiversity Institute (INBIO) in Costa Rica, the American Museum of Natural History, and others. The workshop participants worked together to plan the network's development, and identify user needs, data availability, and data standards for pollinator information collection, exchange, and management.

Making Pollinator Data Available

Recognizing the contributions of the GBIF to making pollinator specimen data widely and freely available, the PTN will cooperate with the GBIF

and encourage owners of pollinator specimen data to make them available through the GBIF. Where necessary, the PTN will provide data hosting services to pollinator data owners. The PTN will also work to implement standards and develop tools for the management and dissemination of pollinator observation data.

Bringing Pollinator Experts Together

The first of many tools planned for development by the PTN, the Pollinator Experts Database will provide access to experts in pollinator species biology, ecology, taxonomy, research, habitats, and other related aspects. This and other products of the PTN will be made widely and freely available via the Internet.

To support the continued growth of the IABIN PTN, the University of Sao Paulo developed an intranet portal and listserv that is hosted by the Foundation for Research Support of the State of São Paulo (FAPESP) online at <http://pollinators.incubadora.fapesp.br/portal>. The NBII developed and hosts the PTN Web site at

<http://pollinators.iabin.net>. Through these and other tools the PTN will facilitate communication and collaboration among international pollinator information owners.

An International Priority, an International Mission

The PTN will facilitate the discovery, collection, digitization, management, and exchange of pollinator observation and collection data from and throughout the Western Hemisphere together with, and in support of The Forgotten Pollinators Campaign (1996), the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (1996) (also administered by the Coevolution Institute), the Brazilian Pollinator Initiative (1998), the African Pollinator Initiative (1999), the International Pollinator Initiative in the Convention on Biological Diversity (2000; 2002), and the European Pollinator Initiative (2004).

For More Information

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